1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

lituki (plur. *matuki*), a breast. This includes all who are supposed to be descended from a common ancestress. Often the direct line of descent from the founding ancestress is not known for more than three or four generations. The small groups which can definitely claim to be 'of one breast' constitute the distinct matrilineal groups which live together in separate hamlets within a village. Each is undifferentiated in relation to other matrilineal groups, but internally each is differentiated on the principle of sibling unity.

The main emphasis of the kinship system is on the bond between a man and his sisters. Their relationship is summed up in the word *mbumba* (translated by Mitchell as 'sorority group'). A man speaking of his *mbumba* refers to all the women he calls sister, their daughters, and their daughters' daughters. Strictly speaking, female kin in the ascending generations are excluded, as belonging to the *mbumba* of his mother's brother. The 'warden' of a sorority group, *anyene mbumba*, is the senior of the brothers and is responsible for the behaviour of the women in his charge; he appears for them in court and pays fines on their account. He plays an important part in the marriage negotiations. It is his duty to consult the diviner if his sister or her child falls ill, and to be chief mourner at the funeral of either of them, also providing medicine for the ritual purification at the end of the mourning period. Formerly these obligations were balanced by certain rights. He could sell some of them into slavery for his own personal reasons. This privilege is ended, but even to-day it is through his sorority group that a man achieves status and independence.

The principle of sibling unity is expressed in many other ways. A man and his sister reciprocally call each other *alombwanga*. More usually, a woman calls her brother, older or younger than herself, *acimwene* (a term of respect usually applied to a chief), for any brother may be regarded as warden of her sorority group. A man has the same duties to his younger brothers as to his sisters, so they also call him *acimwene*, but he calls them *mpwanga* 'younger brother', as they can never be in the position of warden in relation to him. Maternal uncles are called *akulumwe*, and a sister's son *cipwa*.

Within each matrilineal descent group, differentiation takes place between members according to whether they are siblings or not. A man's sorority group included ideally his own siblings and their female matrilineal descendants. His sister's daughters are also the sorority group of his sister's son, their brother, so that any woman can belong at any one moment to the sorority groups of her brother, her mother's brother, her mother's mother's brother, &c., but the effective one is that of her own brother, if adult. He is consulted first in small disputes, and at the marriage ceremony each party is represented by a brother as well as by a mother's brother. In the break-up of a hamlet (described below, p. 12), siblings tend to hold together more closely than cousins and to form groups of their own, so that each woman in the descent line is a potential point of cleavage. Tension between brothers as they compete for control of the sorority group is a source of friction within the sibling group which eventually leads to its disruption.

Since marriage is mainly matrilocal, and extra-village, the husband in his wife's village is seen as a stranger by all the members of her matrilineal descent group. There is a tendency for members of such descent groups to live together in a cluster of huts. The word 'hamlet' is used by Mitchell to indicate a cluster of huts, in which

2: Mitchell E-5 [1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

2. Free men are under their elder brother in the first instance, but they may carry their cases to the headman of their village or even to the chief of the country.
3. Slaves were entirely under their own master.[1]

The headmen's subservience to the chief is described in the following passage:

> In all public transactions the headman represents his village. He receives the chief's orders and sees them carried out. When he kills an elephant he sends one of the tusks to the chief. Should he kill twenty elephants he is not expected to give up twenty tusks—two or three would be sufficient. If he shoots a large buck he gives one haunch of venison. For all such tributes he expects to receive in return a present (generaly a little powder). . . . He is expected to attend the chief's parliament unless he is under an elder brother in which case he is not allowed to speak, except when especially commissioned. Headmen are expected to report all cases of war, but they often attack enemies without telling their chief beforehand, saying, 'Let him hear of the surprise when it succeeds.' Yet this is dangerous unless they are sure of success, and well acquainted with the chief's private sentiments. On reporting an attack they present the chief with part of the booty. In times of war each headman when summoned, must follow his chief's flag, otherwise his village is burned down, and all that fail to escape are killed or enslaved.[2]

Yet within the framework of this organization villages were markedly autonomous. MacDonald's description, which I have just quoted, brings this out very well. Elsewhere he writes: 'The chief may often have less influence than powerful headmen, and we have known cases where he simply contented himself with grumbling when his headmen acted contrary to his desire.'[3] The chief did not differ greatly from his more powerful headmen. A certain amount of ritual in terms of ancestor worship embellished his position, and he had some ascendancy over village headmen to whom he had given land. Yet, in the last analysis, the chief had to rely on his personal following and military power to subjugate headmen who were becoming too powerful. The chief was therefore in direct competition with his subject village headmen, and involved in a constant struggle with them for followers. MacDonald describes how the chief himself was a

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 135.
[2] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 137.
[3] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 135.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

XXVI sets out the position of a casual sample of 36 villages in Chiwalo and Nyambi areas. Among the 23 villages which had

TABLE XXVI

SIZE OF VILLAGES UNDER HEADWOMEN AND HEADMEN

Type of Village	Under 10 Huts	Over 10 Huts	Total
No matrilineage male resident .	13	2	15
Matrilineage male resident . .	10	11	21
Total	23	13	36

less than 10 huts each, 13 or 56·6 per cent had no male matrilineage members living in them. Among the 13 villages which had more than 10 huts, only two or 15·4 per cent had no matrilineage male members living in them.[1] The largest village in which there was no matrilineal male had only 11 huts. When the size of the village increases, the senior male matrilineage member tends to move in to live with his wards.

THE SORORITY-GROUP (*mbumba*)

But as the village grows and the duties of a senior matrilineage male become more onerous, a form of organization appears within the lineage which lessens his burden. This takes the form of the differentiation of sibling groups, and is part of the normal process of segmentation which is inherent in any lineage system. Consistent with the Yao idea that men should take care of the affairs of the lineage, sisters look to their eldest brother when they are in trouble. This group of sisters in the care of their brother is called *mbumba*. In the plural *acambumba* the word refers to women in general, but in the singular it refers to a particular group of women in the way I have explained. The word is always used in the sense of '*so-and-so's mbumba*', as *mbumba je CeMayele*. The central concept here is the brother-sister link and I have accordingly translated the word *mbumba* as sorority-group.

The man who is in charge of the women, usually their eldest

[1] Diff. of per cent = 42·1 ; S.E. of diff. = 17·1 ; C.R. = 2·4 ; p = 0·0164.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

●593 brother, is called *asyene mbumba*, or 'the warden of the sorority-group'. As one would expect among a matrilineal people, the link between a man and his mother and sisters is strong. But it is the link with his sister that is strongest. She relies on him for protection, particularly when she becomes ill, but also in her [582] relationships with her husband. Her brother will be her junior marriage surety, and he will give the consent which will allow a man to marry her. Also a woman's brother will have to consult [731] the diviner and find the medicines when she or her children sicken. In times of distress, as, for example, if her crops have failed, she will appeal to her brother for help. Similarly the man is dependent on his sister in a number of subtle ways. He can always rely on her for hospitality, and is able to get a meal from her if he needs it. But his dependence on his sisters for prestige is much more important. The significance of this will emerge when we see the *mbumba* organization in the light of the segmentation and fission of the lineage. A man can only found a new village if he has the full support of his sisters. A sister also plays a most important rôle at the birth of his children. She represents him both at the first foetal-quickening ceremony and at the birth of his child, when she listens to the birth-pang confessions of his wife.[1]

At the same time the relations of sister and brother are restricted by custom. A man must never appear too familiar with his sister, especially in sexual matters. He may not, for example, [513] sleep in the same hut as she does; if she is away and he sleeps in her empty hut he must not make his bed in the place where she usually sleeps. He may not even sit on her sleeping mat. [835] Authentic cases of incest with a sister are extremely rare, whereas I recorded three or four cases of father-daughter incest while I was in the field. Supposed cases of brother-sister incest are recounted and discussed widely. This is understandable because [754] a man who is suspiciously familiar with his sister is suspected of being a sorcerer, since it is widely believed that a sorcerer usually obtains the power that he needs for the performance of his dire deeds by sleeping with his sister. The riddle of the initiands—'What is the sweetest fruit which may not be tasted?' Answer, 'Your sister'—neatly reflects the attitude of the Yao.

The close link of brother and sister is also reflected in the

[1] The significance of this is explained in Chap. VII, p. 183.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

The close link of brother and sister is also reflected in the kinship terminology. The common term used by both men and women to address sisters is *cemwali* and it is also applied to all women out of respect. But the term which is used descriptively and sometimes in address, cross-sexually, is *alumbwangu* (my sibling-of-opposite sex). It is self-reciprocal and thereby expresses the special relationship between the man and his sisters. Two sisters address each other in everyday conversation as *cemwali*. When it is necessary to be more specific an elder addresses the younger as *akuluwanga*. These are also descriptive terms. A man addresses his younger brothers as *apwanga* while they address him as *acimweni*. Women also address their elder or younger brothers as *acimweni*. This word is widely used as an honorific title but it is especially used for people who are in authority. The chief, for example, may be referred to as the *mcimweni*, and men frequently call their mother's brothers and other senior matrilineal male relatives by this term. An elder brother has the same duties towards his younger brothers as to his sisters, so that use of the term of address *acimweni* here indicates his position of authority over them.

From the point of view of a warden, his sorority-group is essentially made up of his sisters. We have seen that he is responsible for his younger brothers in exactly the same way as he is for his sisters, though technically they are not his sorority-group. He also has control over his sister's children so that ideally a warden sees his sorority-group as his sisters and their daughters and their daughter's daughters and so on. But a man's sister's daughters will probably have as their warden their own brother who stands in the same relationship to them as their mother's brother stands to their mother. The matrilineage is therefore organized internally in a system of inclusive sorority-groups extending from the eldest surviving member down to the youngest. However, a component sorority-group of a matrilineage does not begin to appear as a corporate group until the man who is to be its leader is old enough to take charge of the affairs of the women under him. Naturally, the age at which this happens is largely a matter of circumstance. Theoretically a man may not take charge until he has been initiated. But Yao boys nowadays are usually initiated at about 8 to 10 years of age. Obviously a child of this age cannot take over the affairs of his adult sisters, so that his mother's brother looks after

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

613 560 593 604 them until he grows up. It is only when the boy becomes adolescent that he begins to take an active part in these affairs. This may begin in a small way. He may, for example, accompany his mother's brother when he goes to consult a diviner. Or he

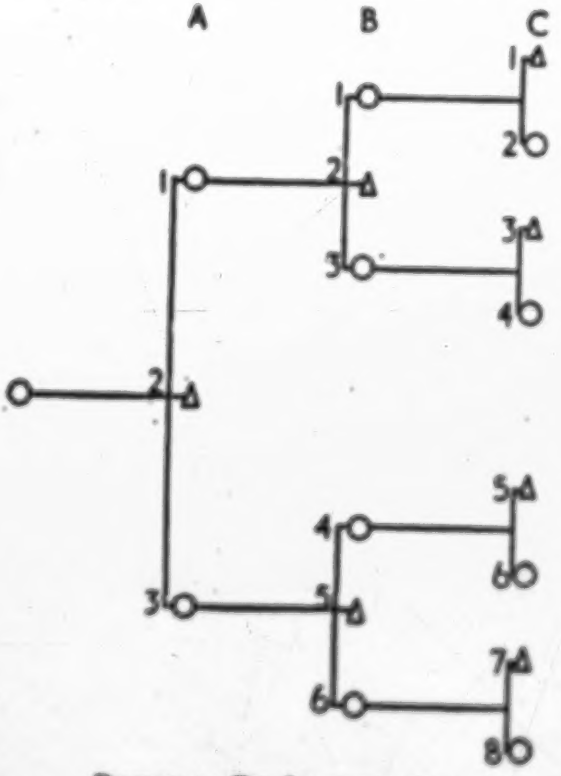

Diagram 3. The Sorority-group.

A1 sees his sorority-group as being composed of A1 and A3 and by extension their children.
B1 sees his sorority-group as B1 and B3 and by extension their children.
B3 sees his sorority-group as B4 and B6 and by extension their children.

may be given the charge of the conjugal affairs of one of his newly-married sisters. Gradually he assumes more and more responsibility. His mother's brother on the other hand falls more and more into the background and becomes rather a consultant than an active participant.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

It is difficult to over-emphasize the importance of the sorority-group in everyday life. There is hardly a social situation in which the relationships of a man to his dependent female matrilineal kin are not involved. Probably marriage is the most frequent context in which his duties to and responsibilities for his sorority-group emerge. When a man wishes to marry a woman, he must get the consent of her brother. Ideally, it is a woman's brother who gives the consent, and if one asks a Yao how he gets married to any particular woman he will answer immediately, 'You go to ask her brother.' When consent has been obtained the woman's brother seeks out the man's brother and formally meets him, thereby setting the public seal on the relationships between the man and the woman. This gives the husband particular rights over his wife and her activities. After this, the difficulties of any of the marriage partners are the concern of the two sponsoring relatives (*acinamangonve*) whom I have called 'marriage sureties'. They meet to discuss the illnesses of either of the marriage partners or their children and try to settle the differences that arise in the married life of their wards. They must be consulted before the marriage can end, and in fact they perform the act that ends the marriage, i.e. one pays a nominal sum of say 2*s.* to the other.

According to the Yao, women *are quite helpless* in their relationships with others, in illness or in any court cases, and must always have a man to look after them. They are seen to be as dependent on him as children are upon their parents. A statement made to me by old Naliwa, a man who has been looking after a sorority-group for years, reflects this attitude of the men towards the women in their care.

These dependent women (*mbumbi*) are as annoying as children to look after. They are *mimi*[1] indeed. If a child is ill they go to tell their brother who says, 'Very well, I shall come to see the child.' If he is not very quick to do it they are likely to be backbiting. If he finds the child very ill he goes to tell the marriage sureties of its father, and they go to a diviner to look for medicine for the sick child. Then the sisters say that he is a good man because he gets on with the job when a person is ill.

Soon the child's mother becomes ill. Someone goes to tell her brother who says that he will come to see her. He visits her husband's

[1] Backbiting. See Chap. VI, pp. 133-4.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

562 578 593 marriage surety and together they consult diviners and find medicine until she recovers. Then he goes back to his village.

He has no sooner got back when someone comes along to tell him that the child is ill again. He says, 'I am busy, I have some work to do. Tell someone else to go to the diviner.' The messenger goes back to his sisters and they say to each other: 'He is not a good man. He refuses to go to the diviner for the child.' Another says, 'Yes, it is so. Our brother is not diligent and when he comes here he will get no food from us. He eats our food but he does not work for us. Let us ask someone else to look after us. Our younger brother is a good man indeed.' Then everyone agrees that this should be so. The one that all said was a good man before, they all now say is bad. Then the sisters go along to tell the other brother who says, 'Go and tell my elder brother.' The sisters reply that he is not a good man and say, 'We want you to look after us.' He agrees and goes to the diviner to get medicine.

The next morning a husband goes off to his village without saying goodbye.[1] The wife now goes along to tell her younger brother who says that he can do nothing about it and that she will have to tell her older brother. She returns to her village crying, and tells her sisters that she told her brother about her husband's leaving and that he refused to have anything to do with it. Then one of the sisters says, 'Yes, the older one is a good man, not like that bad young one. If this one were the older one he would have already gone to get the man back.' Others say, 'Yes, that young one is not good at all. He is a sulky one. Is he not a sorcerer? Go to the big one and tell him.'

Then the woman goes to the hut of the older brother and tells him of her difficulties. He tells her to go and fetch her husband and if he refuses to come back, to tell him. This she does and he refuses to return. She reports this to his elder brother. He tells her that his younger brother will return and if he does not they will come to talk matters over. The woman goes back to her village and goes to see her elder brother to tell him what she has done. He says, 'Very well, my sister, if he does not come to-day I shall go there to-morrow. Now go home and give the children some food.' When she gets back to the village she says, 'That brother is a good one indeed. He is diligent. He is going to fetch my husband back, if he does not return to-day.' If the man has not come by the next morning the woman goes to tell her brother. He goes to the husband's

[1] *Kwendeka*—to go off in a huff, to go off without saying goodbye. This is a sure sign that there is something wrong and that some action needs to be taken.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

village and seeks out his marriage surety. They call him and tell him that the woman's brother has come to take him back to the village. He says that it is all right and that he will follow that evening. The brother goes back and tells his sister to cook porridge because her husband will be coming that evening, and then he goes home. The husband returns.

The woman now goes to tell her brother that her husband has returned and he says that he will come to visit him in the morning. Next morning her brother comes to the hut and asks her husband why he had left. 'You were cross about something and you did not come to tell me. Now tell me why you left.' The husband now tells him and they talk it over. If they fail to reach an understanding they go to tell the husband's sureties and discuss the case fully. If the woman is wrong her brother reprimands her and if the man is wrong his sureties reprimand him.

To live with a sorority-group needs courage.[1] You must not listen to backbiting. If you listen to the tales of others then you will not be able to live with your sorority-group because your heart has no fierceness. A sorority-group needs a man who has no fear. Then the women listen to what he says. He will say to his sister, 'Sister, hoe your gardens well. Do not have intercourse in the bush because it will finish your children with salt.[2] You must respect your husband and not tell him lies because he will not trust you and will be frightened of you. Listen to what I tell you. Things will be peaceful in your house if you come to tell us what is going on. If you do not tell us then there will be lots of friction.' Then the people say about a man whose sisters are not very happy, 'Who is that man who is not teaching[3] his sorority-group well?' Then the people will mention his name and they will laugh at him. If the sorority-group are living happily together he is a good man and he does not listen to the backbiting. His sorority-group are obeying him well and he lives happily with them.

In this account one cannot but be struck by the ambivalence of the relationship of brothers and sisters. Now they hate each other and now they love each other, depending largely on the fortunes of the moment. But the tie is the strongest in Yao social structure; while the relationships between the sorority-group and any particular brother may vary, the relationship between brothers and sisters in general is unassailable. When

[1] *Wakhakhala mtima*; perhaps more literally translated as 'a stout heart'.
[2] A reference to adultery. See Chap. V, p. 112.
[3] In the sense of teaching them the right way to live, as their mentor.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

613 one brother is unsuitable, they turn to another, uterine or collateral, and only if he too is unsuitable do they then turn to other relatives.

The attitude of Naliwa shows very clearly, too, the dependence of the women on the man. They have to wait for his action before they can settle their difficulties. This is part of the general process of internal differentiation within the lineage. The women become organized into small groups, each under the care of a man. These are siblings, so that their common descent, well expressed by the Yao *mucitumbo cimo*, 'in one womb', is the real unifying bond between them. When a Yao wants to express his close link with his uterine sister, that is to emphasize that she is not a collateral or classificatory sister, he stresses that they are from 'only one womb' (*citumbo cimpepe*). Naliwa says that a man who controls his sorority-group so that they live happily together is a happy man. He is happy also because his prestige is enhanced if he is a warden of a sorority-group. Being a warden is the first step on the ladder which leads eventually to independent village headmanship, and the man who has a large sorority-group under him can achieve this aim more easily. Therefore, the warden of a large sorority-group has even higher prestige than a man who has only a few sisters to look after. But the aphorism that 'chieftainship is slavery'[1] achieves significance when a man acquires more dependants.

Segmentation and Fission in the Matrilineage

613 621 The sorority-group organization in the matrilineage assumes most significance when viewed in its political setting. Segmentation and differentiation within the matrilineage consistently leads to splits, hence to village break-ups and the birth of new villages. Fission in the matrilineage usually appears when the wardens of the younger sorority-groups are over the age of 30. At that age each man is adult and therefore old enough to be responsible for his own and his sorority-group's actions and, usually, his mother's brothers, who when alive had kept their younger relatives united, are dead.

The events leading up to a split in a matrilineage usually follow

[1] From Smith and Dale, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, Macmillan (London, 1920). For its significance, see Gluckman, Barnes and Mitchell, 'The Village Headman in British Central Africa', *Africa*, xix, 3.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

693 as he was supposed to be the sorcerer. Suspicion fell on Mbwana
578 Soma and eventually one of his sisters went back to Mwambajila and
621 complained to him. Later the sisters consulted a diviner and found, as they suspected, that Mbwana Shuma was the sorcerer. Thereupon, they returned to Mwambajila and left Mbwana Soma living alone with his wife.

Here is an example of a village which did not manage to maintain its identity but returned to be re-integrated into its village of origin.

578 Conflicts between collateral brothers are not frequent. This
593 is for two reasons. Firstly, the opposition between lineage
621 segments is usually expressed in a conflict between a man and his mother's brother, a fact which is no doubt related to the opposition of proximate generations. Secondly, lineages seldom persist long enough to contain within them several segments in which collateral brothers are leaders.

Conflicts seem to occur more frequently among uterine brothers, a fact which is significant in the light of the particularly strong bonds which unite them. The relationship between uterine brothers is much the same as that between sisters.[1] They are intimately linked by their bond of kinship and depend on one another for care and support. Usually the elder brother has his younger brothers in his care, in the same way that he has his sisters.

But at the same time they compete for the control of the sorority-group. A man, we have seen, can seek prestige in the indigenous political system only by becoming a village headman. He can become a village headman only by mustering his sisters and setting up a small hamlet with them. The elder brother prevents his younger brothers from doing this because the sorority-group is usually under his care. The younger brother can gain control only if he can persuade his sisters that the elder is a sorcerer, or incapable, or in some way unsuitable for his position. Hence the frequent accusations of sorcery among brothers: it is a rationalization of a hostility arising from the structural position of uterine brothers, which, in view of the commonly accepted strong sentiments uniting brothers, may not be otherwise expressed.

The break-up of Mponda's village in 1940 clearly illustrates

[1] I have dealt with this more fully in my essay in *Seven Tribes*.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

how the opposition of brothers emerges in a situation where the lineage is concerned.

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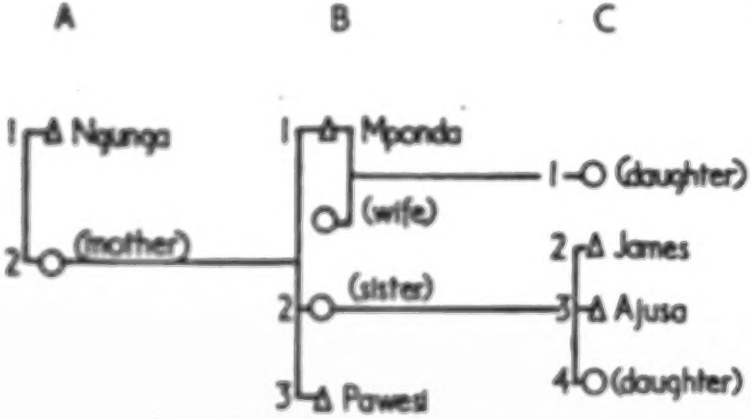

REFERENCE GENEALOGY. MPONDA VILLAGE.

Mponda, a village headman, was married virilocally. One day his daughter went to the pounding point in the village and found that her cross-cousin, the daughter of the headman's sister, was there. A quarrel arose between the two girls over the pounding mortar. Presently they started to fight. The wife of *Mponda* then came out and caught hold of her husband's sister's daughter and beat her. *Mponda's* sister had gone to draw water and was just returning. She heard her daughter crying out and ran to the place to find her sister-in-law beating her. The two women had a quarrel about this and separated with bad feelings. The next morning the quarrel broke out again. In the altercation that morning the headman's sister rebuked the headman's wife for behaving in a way which did not befit her position. The headman's wife on the other hand threatened to leave the village if this went on. The bickering continued for some time and eventually the two women came to blows. The headman's sister, who got the worst of this encounter, now decided to take the matter up to the headman. When she told him about it he refused to listen to her complaint. He told her that he had brought his wife to the village and that he did not want to have her treated like a slave. Another sister now chimed in and said that *Mponda* ought to invite his younger brother along to help him to settle the case. Another recommended their leaving him altogether because he was telling his wife to despise his sisters. To this *Mponda* replied that the village was his and that his sisters were only children

578 and that he could not understand who could be inducing them to
talk like this. He told them also that as far as he was concerned they
593 could report the case to whomsoever they wished. The women came
621 out of the hut and went straight to Paweni who was the headman's
younger brother. He told them to go back and to wait a while
before they took further action.

578 After four days had passed the headman's sister who had fought
593 with the headman's wife, became ill. In the morning the sisters sent
754 a message to Mponda but he did not come. They sent another
787 message to Paweni who came and asked if they had told Mponda.
They said that they had, but he had refused to come. Paweni called
James and Ajuna, the sister's sons of the headman, and told them that
he would tell the headman that they were going to find out the cause
of the illness. This they did. The diviner indicated that the head-
man had caused the illness by sorcery, because of the fight between
his wife and sisters. Paweni tested the divination by giving a chicken
some poison. It died, indicating that the divination was accurate.
He took the chicken's head to Ngunga who was Mponda's perpetual
mother's brother.

When Ngunga heard this he refused to believe it. However, he
agreed to send for Mponda and to ask him about it. When he did
so Mponda denied the accusation. Ngunga now produced the
chicken's head and accused Mponda of being a liar. At that moment
a child came to tell them that the woman was dead and the interview
ended. They went to the funeral and the next morning they decided
to have a post-mortem meeting (*msipeto*) in order to decide the cause
of the death. Mitomoni, one of Nyambi's perpetual sons, represented
the chief. Ngunga opened the discussion by telling the meeting that
the woman had been killed by the headman because of the fight
between his sisters and wife. Mitomoni asked how they knew this
and Ngunga told of the divination and the poison ordeal. He then
asked Mponda if he had heard what had been said and what he had
to say. Mponda replied that he knew nothing of it. Ngunga said
that Mponda was a bad man and that the others would leave him and
he would have to live alone. Mitomoni told Paweni and Ngunga
that they must not leave the village. Ngunga replied that it was
impossible to stay there while Mponda was so bad. If the women
stayed with him he would finish them all. Paweni collected 30 of
the 40 huts that made up the village and took them away to Chikwao's
area, a distance of about 15 miles. Those who stayed behind with
Mponda were his 'children' and some unrelated people.

593 This case brings to the fore the position of the younger brother
578 as a constant challenge to his elder for the care of his sisters.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

The threat that lies over the head of an inefficient warden of a 543
security-group is that of losing them to his younger brother, and 678
it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the frequency with which this takes place in Yao society.

Intra-lineage Tension and Succession Disputes

The competition between brothers is heightened where the 683
succession to an important name is involved. The rule of succession indicates a man's eldest sister's first-born son as the rightful heir. Informants in Jalasi's area told me that long ago the succession used to pass along the line of collateral brothers first, before dropping a generation to the sister's sons. It is true that in Jalasi's genealogy there are one or two early successions from a man to his most senior brothers, but recently the succession has passed regularly to sisters' sons. MacDonald, writing in 1880, quoted the succession rule for the Mangoche Yao to be 'from a man to his eldest surviving brother and then to the sister's son',[1] but he describes in another part of the book the dispute for Malemia's name involving the deceased chief's younger brother and his sister's son, in which the sister's son's claims prevailed over those of the younger brother.[2] Stannus, writing of the Machinga in 1922, gives the rule of succession as I found it,[3] and suggested that MacDonald's interpretation of the Malemia succession dispute in 1873, was really a mistake, and that both disputants were sisters' sons of the head chief, but of different lineage sections. I cannot decide which account is true, but there seems to be no reason why MacDonald's general rule should be incorrect, especially since so much of the other material he recorded seems to be accurate. Also, as far as I could see, there are no differences in the Mangoche and Machinga Yao in successions to-day, so that it seems likely that there has been a change from adelphic succession to a straight system of matrilineal primogeniture. One is tempted to find a reason for this in the strong emphasis on patrilineal primogeniture in Islam, which was becoming widely accepted in these areas in the *middle* of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately I cannot bring direct evidence to support this hypothesis.

While the succession rule may indicate someone as having the

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 189. [2] MacDonald, *Africana*, ii. 190.
[3] Stannus, 'The Wayao of Southern Nyasaland', 277.

2: Mitchell E-S (1946-1949) 1956 FT? Yao FT?

village but called it Mtowesi and not Mpumbe village. The positions of the lineages in the village would have become inverted, and the patrilineally-linked lineage become the dominant lineage. In this way villages may change their name or they may acquire two names, as happened to Mlungu village in Nyasaka's area. Here a man called Masalo took over the control of the village. He was the son of the previous Mlungu and the village is known to-day by either of these names. The interesting point is what will happen when he dies, because there are now sisters' sons in a distant lineage old enough to take charge of the village. The rule is, as we have seen, that the matrilineal relatives always have the first claim.

Paternity and Segmentation

It is interesting to note that the paternity of brothers or sisters is not a differentiating feature in these social relationships. In the discussions which have hinged upon the care of society-groups I have never heard the paternity of brothers and sisters brought up as a reason why they should hold more or less closely together. The father is important in social life as I point out later, but while groups may be linked through paternity, it does not lead to a second principle of segmentation within the lineage.[1] This is manifestly the result of the fundamental difference in a system of matrilineal descent, where paternity is of less consequence than maternity is in a patrilineal structure. Among the Yao, unlike the matrilineal peoples of Southern and Northern Africa, no marriage payments are made; divorce is easy and frequent, and there are no disputes about the custody of children, who always belong to their mother's group whether they are illegitimate or not.[2] This is consistent with the view of the husband as a mere begetter of children. Among the Yao, the

[1] This aspect of segmentation in matrilineal peoples, with different views of men as points of fission, is brought out particularly in Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *The Nuer*, Oxford University Press (London, 1940), and *Marriage and the Family among the Nuer*, R.-L.I. Paper, No. 11 (1944); Fortes, M., *The Dynamics of Clanship*, and *The Web of Kinship*; Kuper, H., *A Black Aristocracy*, Oxford University Press (London, 1947).

[2] This has been worked out in Gluckman, M., 'Kinship and Marriage among the Lozi of Northern Rhodesia and the Zulu of Natal', in Radcliffe-Brown, A. R., and Forde, C. D. (eds.), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, Oxford University Press for the International African Institute (London, 1950).

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

593 sisters are the points of cleavage in the matrilineage and the
64 group of uterine sisters is seldom divided, unless their daughters are old enough to form a corporate group and to move off with their mother to found a new village under their brother.

The Spatial Representation of Lineage Segmentation

361 The segmentation of the matrilineage is also shown in the
613 spatial distribution of the huts in a village. The daughters of
621 the women of the matrilineage set up their huts near to their mothers', and as this continues over a number of years, the internal segmentation of the matrilineage is automatically reflected in the disposition of huts. Most Yao villages will show this spatial representation of social distance, some more clearly than others. The clearest example I have is in Mesi section of Majoja village, Nyambi's area. The disposition of the huts is set out in the village plan in Appendix C. Here are five fairly distinct groups of huts in the village. Four are descendants of four uterine sisters, the children of the previous Majoja. The space between these four groups is cleared and paths recirculate among the huts. About 200 yards away, the fifth group is out of sight of the others and must be reached by a path leading through the fields. In this cluster of huts live the children of the uterine brother of the four sisters. The matrilineal relatives of Majoja live about half a mile away in a quite distinct cluster.

In Cikoja village the same principles are at work but the situation is somewhat obscured by the number of patrilineally-linked relatives. A glance at the village plan in Appendix D shows that the major segments, denoted by the symbols Ma and Mc in the plan, are quite distinct in the old village site, the huts of Ma being separated from those of Mc by a broad path and by a patch of bamboos. In the new village site across the stream the same general segmentation is shown where the two sections, Ma_1 and Ma_2, are separated by a path.[1] The separation of the clusters of huts is difficult to represent on a diagram because not only are the huts placed in discrete clusters, but they face in towards one another and the space between them is kept clean. Between the clusters there may be rubbish heaps and small garden patches. I describe later how the village continually

[1] I describe how this section of the village came to be across the river on p. 169.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

against Cikoja himself. It is important that not once is a member of the junior major segment, that is a descendant of Citileka (A2), involved in the dispute. Only the descendants of Atukiya (D1) and Amalimba (D2) are involved, with the exception of Salima who appears as the representative of the villagers on the old village site.

The Opposition of the Generations

Segmentation arises as more and more security-groups, the daughters of women, reach adulthood, and as the sons of the same women become old enough to undertake responsibilities for the care of the women. There is, in this situation, a fundamental opposition of generations. A woman is bound to her own sisters and at the same time she is bound to her daughters. These bonds come into conflict when her daughters want to express their unity against their mother's sister's daughters. The mother must decide whether she will go with her daughters to their new village site, or whether she will stay with her sisters and possibly with her own brother. I found consistently that a mother seldom stayed in a village when her daughters were moving out of it. The bond with her children is stronger than that with her sisters. Yet the conflict is clearly present. It finds expression in the kinship terminology. A daughter is usually identified with her mother's mother. A woman's daughter's daughter inherits her name, her position and her property in much the same way as a man succeeds his mother's brother.[1] When this has taken place the terms of address of her parental generation are now reversed. In other words her mother's brother instead of calling her, '*sister's child*' (*yipwo*), calls her '*mother*' (*amao*). Sometimes the qualificative *kamanje* ('who has returned') is used to signify the difference. Her mother's mother's husband even before the succession has taken place calls her '*my wife*', and I have recorded one or two marriages between a man and his wife's daughter's daughter. A man's daughter's daughter must also perform some of the funeral rites for her grandfather after his wife has died.[2]

We have among the Yao, therefore, the familiar principle of

[1] See Chap. V, p. 111.

[2] She cooks the ritual meal which he eats at the end of mourning to protect himself against widow. Here she usually fills her mother's mother's place.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

the identification of alternate generations; and this is particularly significant when we realize that the tension between the filial and parental generations is most likely to find expression in the situation where a group of young adult women wish to leave a village, and their mother, if she is still alive, must make up her mind whether to stay or to follow them.

The existence of rules of succession for men, different from those for women, presents an interesting analytical problem which I have not yet fully explored. Clearly men must succeed to positions in the first ascending generation, for they are the active leaders in Yao society and those who are to succeed must be sufficiently mature to take over the responsibilities of leadership. Women, on the other hand, are usually not leaders so that succession to positions in the second ascending generation involves no difficulties. A young woman may take her mother's mother's name without involving any responsibilities of leadership. Yet the interaction of the two systems of succession presumably has some reaction on the social structure. A man's sister's daughter who succeeds to her mother's mother's position becomes the man's mother and the man's mother's brother's sister. The man's own sister becomes his mother's brother's mother.[1] The effect of this presumably is to achieve some balance of power between a man and his mother's brother. By the rule of succession for women, a man's sister to whom he is tied by the closest possible ties of kinship, and on whom he is dependent for political success, becomes his mother's brother's mother, so forming a common link between two potentially opposed persons. By the same reasoning a man's sister's daughter who is part of his sorority-group and who is likely to desert her mother's mother's brother to go with her mother's brother if there is a conflict, by succession becomes the sister of her mother's brother's mother's brother, so forming a unifying influence within the lineage. This problem emerged after my fieldwork was completed so that I have no evidence to support these suggestions.

Among the men, because of the struggle for political power, the opposition of alternate generations is much stronger than among women. This emerges most clearly in the institution of marriage sureties.

The duties of the marriage sureties towards their wards are

[1] I am grateful to Prof. Gluckman who pointed this out to me.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

CHAPTER VII

THE PATRILATERALLY-LINKED GROUPS

The Position of the Husband and Father

MATRILINEAL descent provides the principle on which the smallest of villages, the hamlets, are organized. But not all villages are made up of huts owned by members of one matrilineage as in Ali Kasonka's village.[1] Most villages in fact have a more complex internal organization which may be epitomized as a dominant matrilineage which carries the village headmanship, and a number of subsidiary lineages linked to the dominant lineage by various means. The most common of these is the patrilateral link whereby the subsidiary lineage is connected to the dominant lineage through one of its men.[2] The subsidiary lineage develops in the village from the matrilineal descendants of the virilocally-married wife of one of the men of the dominant lineage, so that the subsidiary lineage, initially at least, are the 'children' of one of the men of the headman's matrilineage. Their peculiar position in the village must be seen in the light of the general position of the father in Yao society.

The father, obviously enough, is also a son-in-law; obvious as this may seem in English it is charged with meaning for the Yao. When parents-in-law refer to their daughters' husbands they use the term *akwewe*; and they in turn are called this by their sons-in-law. But the *akamwini* are essentially men who are living uxorilocally and *akamwini* is the general status of being a man in uxorilocal marriage. *Mkamwini* thus cannot be translated into English without periphrasis and I translate it merely as 'husband'. I emphasize, however, that whenever I speak of *husbands* or the *husband* in general I mean 'husbands in uxorilocal marriage'. The Yao assume that marriages as a *rule* are uxorilocal. Usually the young husband builds a house in his wife's village and is expected to live there for the rest of his life. But

[1] See Chap. VI, pp. 140-3.

[2] I have called this type of village structure the 'dowry' in my earlier essay, 'The Yao of Southern Nyasaland', *Seven Tribes*, 330 ff.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

he cannot escape the fact that in his wife's village he is only a 'billy goat' and that his 'true home' is in his matrilineal village. The pull of the matrilineal village on him, therefore, is always very strong and he is constantly trying to return there. His wife's responsible relatives are constantly trying to avoid this because they know that in time they are likely to lose the children who will probably settle in their father's village if they grow up there. In general, therefore, a husband must have a very good reason before he can get his wife's kinsmen's permission to take her and her children to his village. His wife's relatives do not easily yield. But a headman must live in his own village so that nearly all headmen bring at least one of their wives into their villages. Other men sometimes succeed in doing so especially if their wives are past child-bearing, but it is typically the headman's wife who lives virilocally.

The husband's interest in returning to his matrilineal village is heightened by the fact that a man in his wife's village is looked upon as the typical man without prestige: a stranger, whose duty is largely procreative. The theme song at the initiation ceremony where the husband was compared with a billy goat, and the common epithet 'chicken rooster' for a husband, reflect the attitude of the Yao towards him. In the song I quoted, the husband was said to be unable to climb high in his village of marriage, however rich he may become.[1] He is, nevertheless, an essential member of the village and the Yao say that it can succeed neither economically nor physically without his aid.

A husband becomes more important when he stays in a village for a long time. He becomes known intimately to the villagers and is conversant with their affairs. He is, therefore, able to advise on many private intra-lineage and intra-village affairs and may even become a marriage surety if there is no more suitable person available. Also in time the husband's position in the village changes. As his children grow up and become active members in the matrilineage, his position of husband becomes supplanted by his position of father, which, in a matrilineal society like that of the Yao, is significant in the same way as that of the mother's brother is in patrilineal societies.

The Yao recognize the close bond between father and child. This bond is conceived to be both social and physical and is

[1] See Chap. V, p. 119.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

rationalized in the Yao theory of conception.[1] They believe that after intercourse the semen clots and embeds itself in the womb. From this the child develops and is nurtured by the mother until it is due to be born. Subsequent acts of intercourse add semen to the body of the child and make it fat. Semen from other men may be used, too, to feed the child in its intra-uterine life, but its body and blood are derived from the semen which first clotted. In Yao opinion there can be one father only.

Not all acts of intercourse lead to impregnation because sometimes, for various reasons, especially in immature women, the semen fails to clot. There is therefore, to the Yao way of thinking, some difficulty in determining the 'father' of a child. This difficulty is met by the belief that the intra-uterine child in some way knows about the doings of its parents and in particular knows who its father is. It therefore refuses to be born unless its father is recognized.[2] Hence if a child is born without undue puerperal complications it is assumed to be the offspring of the man who is currently living with its mother. If labour is prolonged, however, the relatives call for confessions (*kupaw*) from both husband and wife. The husband's confessions are usually formal and simple. The wife's confessions on the other hand are detailed and complete. She confesses the name of an adulterer, and her midwives, including the husband's sisters as his witnesses, wait for the next birth-spasm. If the child is not born at this spasm she is told to confess again. Only after she has confessed to a lover whom the Yao assume to be the genitor will the child eventually be born. After this the aggrieved husband summonses the adulterer to court and he is made to accept the fatherhood of the child.

The act of formally accepting the paternity of a child, which is also done when a woman has a child out of wedlock, confers rights of two types on the child. The first set of rights is directly economic and physical. The father is expected to give the mother salt, money for relish, and cloth to help her rear the child. But this side of a father's duties to his child ceases as soon as another man marries the woman. The new husband then takes over the

[1] I have dealt with this more fully in *Marriage among the Matrilineal Yao*.

[2] It also refuses to be born for other reasons, but the first considered is always the adultery of its parents. See p. 238.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

economic responsibility of all the woman's children regardless of whether he has begotten them or not. For example, people say that a woman married my clerk so that she could have her son initiated. The costs and fees for this boy's initiation amounted to over a pound.

The other set of rights that paternal recognition confers on the child are the moral rights against his paternal kinsmen. A person may turn to his 'father's people' (*hwitsat*) in times of dire need, especially if one of them is rich. This right persists after divorce, though the children are adult and otherwise economically independent. For example, a woman who was married to a labour migrant needed clothes badly. She turned to Chiwalo her father, though he had been divorced from her mother for more than 15 years. People in trouble often run away to their father's village and find shelter there. A man who wanted medicine for success in gambling asked his father for it. Another who had broken a sexual taboo confessed to his father who found suitable medicine for him. In each of these relationships there was an intimate personal element.[1] A person has the moral right to appeal to his father or paternal kinsmen, but he has no legally enforceable right to demand help. He has to rely on their kindness and charity. There are few fathers who would deny their children's requests if they are reasonable, but they can if they wish to.

The divorce rate is high among the Yao[2] and a typical family of five uterine siblings may have three fathers. Furthermore, a man should not marry into the lineage segment where his brother has married, so that the patrilateral kinship ties of the members of matrilineages tend to spread widely in the vicinity of the village. The effect of this is that the members of the lineage as a whole have widespread connections with neighbours upon whom they may rely in times of distress. But of the individual members of the matrilineage only a few share the same group

[1] Compare Fortes's description of uterine kinship among the Tallensi: '[It] is essentially by a personal bond, a bond of mutual interest and concern existing individual to individual'. *The Web of Kinship*, 77.

[2] Eight of every ten men and women over the age of 40 have experienced a divorce at some time of their lives. Excluding the contingency of death a married couple have only 50 chances in 100 of living together for 10 years. For details, see *Marriage among the Mbukinga Yao*.

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of patrilateral kinsmen, so that these bonds are personal and distinctive for each member.

The Development of the Corporate Identity of Patrilaterally-linked Groups

The parent-child relationship is reflected in the structural relationships of a patrilateral group to the dominant matrilineage. Children are less strongly tied to their father than to their matrilineal kinsmen. Usually when a woman dies or is divorced while living virilocally, her children return to her matrilineal village. If the children are too young to express their own wishes, their mother's brother comes for them and they are formally returned to their village of origin. Occasionally children who have grown up in their father's village, especially if they have married their cross-cousins there, refuse to move back to their matrilineal village. They prefer to remain in their father's matrilineal village where they know people more intimately. In time, as they grow older, the women have daughters who may marry uxorilocally and thus a section of a foreign matrilineage begins to develop in the village.

The village as a social unit is more closely integrated when the children who are living there with their father are still young. They do not yet form a corporate group within the village. Their affairs are supposed to be controlled by their mother's brother, but in fact the headman, who is usually their father or a paternal kinsman, may settle many of their minor difficulties and find medicine for lesser illnesses, without bothering their mother's brother. When the children become adults and begin to assert their own wills the position in the village becomes more unstable. As the daughters grow up and marry, their brothers become their junior marriage suretors. If the mother's brother lives far away, the father of the children may be the senior marriage surety. He still has a personal attachment to his children, but his sons' relationships with him may now become affected by structural elements as they tend to interact, with him and others, in certain situations as representatives of corporate groups. As the village develops a son takes over the position of senior marriage surety to the headman's wife's descendants and he becomes the senior male lineage member, while his sisters' sons begin to take over responsibilities for their society-groups.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

593 613 621 The headman and father is now no longer directly concerned in the affairs of the linked lineage, and may only appear in their affairs formally as an adviser or an arbitrator in disputes. For example, he is advised of deaths in the village and of the disputes that have arisen and been settled. But this is part of his relationship to the linked lineage because of his headmanship. A fairly long-established village, therefore, contains two, three or four related lineages with complete autonomy in internal affairs yet together forming one community—one village under the leadership of the headman. As the village persists in time and successive village headmen and other men of the dominant matrilineage bring their wives into the village, related lineage segments develop from them, and the internal structure of the village becomes more and more complex.

613 621 An example of a village of this kind is Cikoja. It has 47 huts.

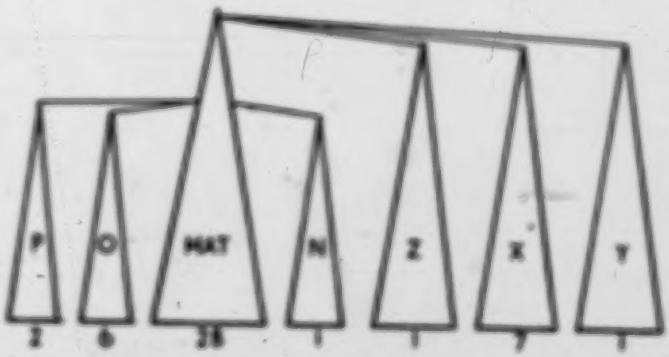

Diagram 4. The Ownership of Huts in Cikoja Village.

One of them is a dormitory for adolescent boys and we may ignore it in this analysis. Members of the dominant matrilineage live in 28 of the huts. Members of patrilaterally-linked groups are living in the remaining 19 huts. There are 6 of these patrilaterally-linked groups in the village and I have indicated them by the letters N, O, P, X, Y and Z. Their origin is as follows:

Z	A descendant of Cikoja IV's first wife	1 hut
X	The descendants of Cikoja IV's second wife	7 huts
Y	The descendants of Cikoja IV's third wife	1 hut

There has never been any shortage of land and therefore the planting out of gardens was a matter which caused little trouble. A man wishing to make a new garden the next season simply marked the site in the bush by tearing some trees or boring around some patches of grass and tying the grass ends into a knot. If anyone else came along and found this plot, the man who had marked it out still claimed it and could not pay for the boring done. Whenever a man was doubtful about a piece of land, he would ask advice of the headmen of the village.

When an abandoned garden had become overgrown, anyone wishing to take it up applied to the headmen who sent him to ask the original owners whether they wished to take it up again. The newcomer could take possession only with their permission.

Often if a village were moved, during the first season the people simply put up shelters in their gardens. Later, the site of the village was chosen and around it a medicine was sprinkled medicine to insure happiness and prosperity. The tree from which this medicine was made became sacred to the village and might not be used for firewood, or was subject to any other taboo the medicine men might care to make. He might also say, "In this village there shall be no pounding of grain at night," etc.

If a village were to be built near a spot previously inhabited, medicine and offerings were made to the departed spirits of the former occupants to put them at rest and "open" the place to the newcomers. The bone-pot from the grave of some former chief or headman, who was supposed to have directed the destinies of the old village, was brought to the new location and here placed in it to insure his continued guidance.

In the case of a village into which a number of men had married, the spokesmen of the wives went to the spokesmen of the husbands and asked permission to move the village. Later, beer was brewed in the new village and the spokesmen invited to come and drink and "put feet in the new village."

Relationship. Family relationship among natives presents certain difficulties to the European accustomed to equivalent relationship of males and females on both sides of the family. In the diagram below (Fig. 1) the relationship of the two children (C 1) will be traced. The mother and father (F 10 and 9) are the subjects and were but addressed as owner and chief. The maternal uncles elder and younger than the mother (F 11 and 12) are called chinalume and their wives (F 13 and 14) alongwe. The maternal aunts are addressed as amai, mother, anyone older than the mother being distinguished as amai mukulungwe, "the bigger" (F 15), a younger aunt as amai wamanki, "the lesser" (F 17); their respective husbands are addressed atati, atati mukulungwe (F 16), and atati wamanki (F 18). On the father's side the uncles are called atati mukulungwe (F 1) and atati wamanki (F 2), respectively, for those older and younger than the father, and their wives amai mukulungwe (F 3) and amai wamanki (F 4). The paternal aunts are called atati mukulungwe (female termin) (F 5 and 7), their husbands (F 6 and 8) atati.

* This name, p. 364.

The children of maternal uncles (C 6 and 8) and of paternal aunts (C 5 and 4) are called *wiuku wakaiwanzi* (dog, matured), and, commonly, the children of maternal aunts (C 7 and 9) and of paternal uncles (C 1 and 3) are called "brothers and sisters"; one would address the other as "*dzwanzi*" or "*mkwanzwa*," but either is valid for the other.

It is interesting, therefore, to note that *wuhajidzi* is of two kinds: the relationship between a child and his maternal aunts' children or his paternal uncles' children is *wuhu*, whereas the relationship with his maternal uncles' children or his paternal aunts' children is *wiuwani*.

It is easily understood why the maternal aunts' children are considered as brothers and sisters, as among the Tso, patrilineal descent is the rule, the children taking the clan of

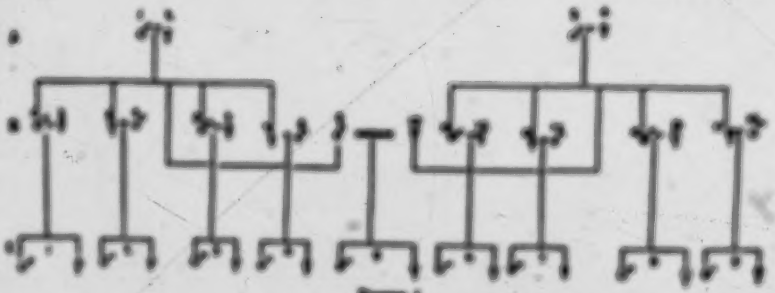

Figure 1

the mother. In the diagram, this is indicated in black. That the paternal uncles' children bear the same relationship would seem to indicate that matrilineal descent is not absolute but that dual descent from both parents is recognized.

Children C 6 may not marry C 7 and 9, nor C 1 and 3. In the case of the former, this is because persons of the same clan may not marry, but in the case of the latter, no such reason is given but they are simply said to be brothers and sisters. Children C 6 may marry their cousins C 8 and 9 and C 2 and 4, but this is not very common as it is said such marriages are always unhappy.

The wife of a maternal uncle (B 10) speaks of her nephew by marriage (C 6) as *mwami, kwihwadi, kwesane*, in the event of her husband's death, this nephew would inherit from him and he might marry the widow.

A parent-in-law or child-in-law is called *mkwapwa kalikwanzija*. Paternal and maternal grandparents, and grandchildren and aunts are all called *wuhajidzi*: a grandchild, *chinukulu*.

The words *wiuti* and *mwa* commonly mean father and mother, but, as given above, there are other words for these two parents, whereas *wiuti* and *mwa* are applied to certain aunts

marriage-enemy for the marriages of the members of the group. Briefly this means that he must be approached before a marriage can be legally contracted by any member of his charge, he or his representative is present at the ceremony which formally sanctions the marriage, and he is responsible for the behaviour of his female relatives in that marriage. Third, he is immediately concerned with the physical welfare and health of his security-group. He must track down the sorcerers causing their illnesses and supply the medicine to heal them. He has to arrange for the ritual purification of mourners after the death of one of the security-group's members. Fourth, he must be present in the court-house if one of his charges is involved in a case and he is usually looked to for the money for the fine. I have known a case not to begin because the warden of the security-group was not present. Frequently if the husbands of the female members of his charge default, he has to provide the hut-tax money.

Usually the warden of the security-group is the eldest brother of a group of adult full sisters. The younger brothers of the group of sisters, while concerned with their welfare, do not stand in this particular responsible position. They refer to the security-group as "*our* security-group". The elder brother refers to the security-group, he is noted, as "*my* security-group", and this sets him over and against his younger brothers. The position that the warden holds, however, is not rigidly fixed, for a younger brother may assume control of the security-group if for some reason he is dissatisfied with the way in which affairs are being conducted, and is able so to assert himself.

If we recall that the status of a man in a Yao community is determined by the number of dependents that he can command, it is easy to see that relationships between an elder brother and his younger brother are distinctive. The elder brother is responsible for the actions of his younger brother in much the same way as he is for one of his security-group, and the younger brothers have a great emotional attachment to their elder brothers. Yet at the same time the elder brother stands in the way of the younger brother in his striving for status, in that while the elder brother is warden of the security-group the younger brother cannot fill, and therefore cannot have dependents and status. It is not surprising to find that accusations of sorcery are frequently made between brothers and the result often is that the younger brother takes the security-group away from his senior brother to some other place and sets up a new village with it. Therefore, one possible source of instability in a Yao village lies in the operation of the kinship system in a system of village which embraces status by adherents.

I have thus far been describing the simplest types of village. In the larger groups it is common for the warden of the security-group to live in the village where his security-group is. Then he usually brings one (or sometimes more) of his wives to the village, where she lives patrilocally. The daughters that are born to her do not return to the security-group from which the headman's wife came but marry and set up households near their mother in the village of their father. Thus there develops in time a second security-group in the village, alongside the first security-group, and related to it through the headman. At this point we may say that the man's position has changed from that of headman of a village containing a single security-group, to the more complicated and less secure one of village headman over a more hetero-

6: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1947) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

he noted that only 17—11 per cent. of the whole sample of 148 women—had never married and that 13, 80 per cent., of these (or 10 per cent. of the total) were under the age of 20 and therefore stood a good chance of yet marrying. Furthermore, 2 of the 4 women over 20 who had not married were known definitely to be incapable of marrying (one is insane and the other has virulent epileptic fits).

There were 33 women who were divorcees or widows (21·3 per cent.), but it should be noted that 17 (or 11 per cent. of the 148 women) were over the age of 45 and therefore were past, or nearly past, the child-bearing period. Those in the younger age-groups stood good chances of remarrying. Table IV shows that though the divorce rate is high[1] remarriage is common. By the time a woman's child-bearing period has ended she has been married on the average 1·7 times. Few marriages are contracted after child-bearing ceases.

TABLE IV. *Marriages and Dissolutions of Marriage experienced by all Women over the Age of 15*

Present age	No. of women	No. of marriages contracted	No. of divorces experienced	No. widowed	No. still married	No. of marriages per woman	No. of divorces per woman	No. of remarriages per woman ended by death of husband	No. of remarriages per woman still existing
15–20	40	40	1	—	40	0·90	0·02	0·00	0·98
20–30	78	164	48	2	84	1·50	0·45	0·03	0·81
30–40	30	102	30	18	30	1·73	0·51	0·29	0·74
Over 40	30	88	19	30	15	1·70	0·53	0·63	0·48
Total	148	333	108	50	169	1·58	0·43	0·20	0·63

These statistics, showing the early age of marriage, the early commencement of child-bearing, the high incidence of marriage among women, and the high rate of remarriage during the child-bearing period, all point to the high valuation of reproduction reflected in Yao culture. This is consistent with their social structure, where the major corporate groups are kinship groups and reproduction is the principal method of recruitment to the group. Furthermore, because the standard of living is almost at subsistence level, children do not entail the economic losses they do in Western society. On the other hand, they are expected to support their aged parents when they themselves are economically independent. In other words, there are few factors militating against reproduction and many in favour of it.

We may expect the beliefs and customs surrounding child-birth to reflect the value of reproduction. For instance, the Yao distinguish clearly between women who have borne children and those who have not. When a girl becomes pregnant for the first time she undergoes a special ceremony (*kwâte*) accorded only to women who have borne children. This ceremony has many of the features of a *rite de passage* and appears to mark the passing of the woman to a new social status. Furthermore, women are ascribed status according to the number of children they have borne. The word *amwali* signifies a young woman who has not yet borne a child; *awwali*

[1] Between a third and a half of the marriages contracted by women had been dissolved by divorce by the time the child-bearing period had ended.